

University of Montana

## ScholarWorks at University of Montana

---

University of Montana Course Syllabi

Open Educational Resources (OER)

---

Spring 2-1-2007

### C&I 470.01: Young Adult Literature and Critical Reading

Jan LaBonty

*University of Montana, Missoula*, [jan.labonty@umontana.edu](mailto:jan.labonty@umontana.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/syllabi>

## Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

---

#### Recommended Citation

LaBonty, Jan, "C&I 470.01: Young Adult Literature and Critical Reading" (2007). *University of Montana Course Syllabi*. 11613.

<https://scholarworks.umt.edu/syllabi/11613>

This Syllabus is brought to you for free and open access by the Open Educational Resources (OER) at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in University of Montana Course Syllabi by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@mso.umt.edu](mailto:scholarworks@mso.umt.edu).

Young Adult Literature and Critical Reading  
C & I 470

Dr. Jan LaBonty  
Educ. 309  
243-5161  
[jan.labonty@mso.umt.edu](mailto:jan.labonty@mso.umt.edu)

Office hours: MW 8:00-8:30  
10:00-11:00  
By appointment TH and F

**Purpose:** The purpose of this class is to develop a thorough understanding of the category of books called ‘Young Adult Literature’; to understand its history; to study the genres, the authors, and the themes; and to examine the means of bringing the world of fine literature to readers between the ages of 12 and 18.

**Outcomes:** By the end of the semester, you will have grappled successfully with the following topics:

The historical development of Young Adult Literature, the current trends, and the enduring characteristics;

Those who write for this challenging audience, what compels them, what challenges them?

The literary measuring stick for determining quality in Young Adult Literature;

The prickly issue of censorship and establishing the ‘canon’;

Getting fine books into the hands of readers

*“Of all passages, coming of age, or reaching adolescence, is the purest, in that it is the loneliest. Going from a boy or girl to a man or woman is a huge leap on the slimmest of information.”*

David Van Biema

**Required reading:**

A faculty pack, loving collected and prepared, available at Denny’s on Higgins

The following books, each selected painstakingly on a competitive basis (narrowed down from a list of 105)

*Monster* by Walter Dean Myers (let’s begin with reality)

*Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger (the classic book everyone must read)

*Solitary Blue* by Cynthia Voight (outstanding writing style and characterization)

*Who Will Tell My Brother?* by Marlene Carvell (very timely NA topic)

*Surviving the Applewhites* by Stephanie Tolan (finally, some humor)  
*Stotan!* by Chris Crutcher (one of the best sports books ever)  
*King of the Mild Frontier* by Chris Crutcher (now we know how he writes so well)  
*Ruby in the Smoke* by Philip Pullman (such a great villain!)  
*The Devil's Arithmetic* by Jane Yolen (best Holocaust book to date)  
*Invitation to the Game* by Monica Hughes (Science fiction for those who don't like SF)  
*The Wish List* by Eoin Colfer (who but an Irishman could make dying so amusing?)

## **Tentative schedule**

### **January 25**

- a. Introduction to the class
- b. Discussion of Young Adult literature
- c. Discussion of topics
- d. Draw a Newbery year
- e. Draw an author

### **February 1**

- a. Young adults and their reading
- b. the history of Young Adult Literature
- c. Pop culture and Young Adult Literature
- d. Journal article #1: Promoting Young Adult Literature: The other 'real' literature

### **February 8**

- a. Evaluating, promoting, and using Young Adult Literature in the classroom
- b. Picture books for older readers
- c. Overview of the genres
- d. Journal article #2: From insider to outsider: The evolution of Young Adult literature

### **February 15**

- a. Censorship, Who decides what will be read?
- b. Ethnic literature
- c. Parents and Young Adult Literature
- d. Values and relations in books
- e. Journal article #3: Tale of a reluctant dragon

### **February 22 Reading day**

### **March 1**

- a. Book club for *Catcher in the Rye*
- b. The classics
- c. The literary canon
- d. Journal article #4: A demand for excellence in books for children

**March 8**

- a. Book club for *A Solitary Blue*
- b. The modern problem novel
- c. Journal article #5: Honoring their stories, too: Literature for Gay and Lesbian teens

**March 15**

- a. Book club for *Who Will Tell My Brother?*
- b. A new day for poetry
- c. Including drama in the classroom
- d. Journal article #6: *Shattering images of violence in Young Adult Literature: Strategies for the classroom*

**March 22**

- a. Humor matters
- b. Comedy club (bring something funny to read)
- c. Journal article #7: Why don't we ever read anything happy?
- d. Novel: *Surviving the Applewhites*

**March 29 Spring Break****April 5**

- a. Sports as a metaphor for life
- b. Adventure stories
- c. Journal article #8: Writing across cultures
- d. Novels: *Stotan, King of the Mild Frontier*

**April 12**

- a. The appeal of a good mystery
- b. Science fiction
- c. Journal article #9: Taming the alien genre: Bringing Science Fiction into the Classroom

**April 19 Reading day****April 26**

- a. Westerns
- b. Books about war
- c. Holocaust literature
- d. Historical fiction
- e. Novel: *The Devil's Arithmetic*
- f. Newbery year presentations, papers due

**May 3**

- a. Stories of the supernatural
- b. Memories and personal experiences
- c. Biography and autobiography
- d. Novels: *Invitation to the Game*, *The Wish List*
- e. Author study presentations, papers due
- f. Book lists due

**May 10 final week**

- a. final exam

**Required tasks:*****Book club (20%)******Newbery paper and presentation (15%)******Author study, paper and presentation (15%)******Required readings, articles and books (10%)******Reading list (40%)*****Grading Scale:**

100-99 A+ (100%)	91-90 B+ (91%)	83-82 C+ (83%)	75-74 D+ (75%)
98-94 A (96%)	89-86 B (88%)	81-78 C (80%)	73-70 D (72%)
93-92 A- (93%)	85-84 B- (85%)	77-76 C- (77%)	69-68 D- (69%)
67 and below F			

**Book Club:**

You will each participate in a Book Club for one of the three novels selected for this purpose. With your partners, you will plan for a presentation about an hour long and will submit an accompanying paper (due the following week). Included in the paper (done individually) will be a rationale for using the book, a study of the author, a critical review of the book, and reader response activities, and of course, a reflection. Lead us in an hour-long intensive discussion of the book with in depth questions.

Food is required.

**Newbery Award Activities:**

You will draw a year to focus on the Newbery winner and honor books. Read all of them and try to bring them to class with you the night this is due. Your paper will include a brief history of this prestigious award, a discussion of each of the books with an eye toward literary criticism, and your opinions on why each book was honored.

**Author study:**

You will draw an author who writes for young adults. Read the person's autobiography and as many of his or her books as you can. Your paper and presentation will focus on the connection between this person's life and his or her writing.

**Required reading:**

In addition to the eleven books I have ordered, you will read 36 books, with at least 30 of them written in the last 15 years. I will distribute a sample of what this list will look like. Individual finals will be prepared based on the list you hand in.

Contemporary Realistic Fiction: 6	Modern Fantasy: 2
Poetry collections: 2	Science Fiction: 4
Adventure: 3	Historical Fiction: 4
Sports: 4	Biography: 3
Mysteries: 3	Short Story Collection: 2
Series Books: 1	Supernatural: 2

Attendance is required; more than one absence or a pattern of tardiness will result in a reduction in your final grade. All papers must have a cover sheet and be referenced when necessary, using the current edition of the Style Manual. Late papers are not accepted.

This will be a seminar class; we will spend our time not in lecture, but talking about books. Come to class having read whatever is on the agenda for that night. We will do different things with the faculty pack; sometimes, I will give you a question about which to write prior to class; sometimes, we will write in class. I may even ask you to come up with a writing prompt or discussion questions. Bring books you are reading to class as we discuss each genre so that we can learn from one another.

There is not a text for the class; there are, however, books connected to Young Adult Literature on reserve for you in the TRC. In the faculty pack you will also find extensive lists of books to get you started in your reading for the class. Do not include books that were required in either 316 or 405 on your required reading lists. (Yes, I know what they are.)

*All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instruction and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University.*

*All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at <http://www.umn.edu/SA/VPSA/index.cfm/page/1321>.*